

U.S. MISSION
GERMANY

ADDRESSES & CONTACT
INFO:

- **BERLIN:**
Clayallee 170
Tel: 030-8305-0
0830-1200 M-F
- **FRANKFURT:**
Giessenerstr. 30
Tel: 069-7535-0
0730-1130 M-F
- **MUNICH:**
Königinstrasse 5
Tel: 089-2888-0
1300-1600 M-F
- [For more information, click here.](#)

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American Citizen News

QUARTER 3, 2008

Autumn Changes

A warm welcome to all newly registered Americans, and greetings to those of you already resident in Germany! Autumn is traditionally associated with change, and this year is no different. With Presidential elections, passport cards, and new regulations for visitors to the United States, there is a lot to learn, but also great opportunities to travel and experience all that Germany has to offer. Prepare for those changes by informing yourself, and read on for more details!

Pull on Your Lederhosen for Oktoberfest!

The first Oktoberfest was a celebration of Bavarian Crown Prince Ludwig's marriage to Princess Therese von Sachsen-Hildburghausen on October 12, 1810. They held a horse race on October 17 as part of the festivities, and historians place the first "official" day of Oktoberfest on those two dates. The festival was held off and on until 1819, when it was decided to be an annual celebration. The dates were moved forward to take advantage of Bavaria's beautiful September weather, but always ends in October, usually the first weekend. It has been held every year since then, except when epidemics or wars prevented the celebration.

Oktoberfest celebrations take place all over Germany, but the oldest and main festivities take place in Munich, this year from **September 20—October 5**. The official opening ceremonies this year take place on Saturday, September 20th, in the Schottenhamel tent. The lord mayor of Munich taps the first keg of Oktoberfest Beer at noon, after which the taps will be open for all visitors. More detailed information on the festivities, stalls, tents, and shops can be found at the official website, www.oktoberfest.de.

The American Consulate General in Munich warmly welcomes culture lovers celebrating at Theresienwiese, and would like to help you plan for your safety during the festivities. Start by letting your family or friends know where you are and how to contact you during your trip. Munich is very safe, but you should still keep your cell phone, money, keys and hotel address with you at all times, safely enclosed in an **inside** pocket of your bag. Keep a copy of your passport in another safe place, like your hotel safe or saved into your email account.

In case the unlikely *should* happen, there are a number of emergency services available to you during Oktoberfest. At the Oktoberfest grounds, the Servicezentrum Theresienwiese houses first aid and the police, and there is a Security Point for Women, including an escort service, operated by "Sichere Wiesen für Mädchen und Frauen" at the Servicezentrum. See their website for more information: www.sicherewiesen.de. The **Munich Consulate** is here to help you too - in an emergency during normal work hours (Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm) call **089-2888-580**, or emergencies *only* after hours and on weekends at **089-2888-0**. If your passport becomes lost or stolen, you can apply for a new one in Munich **only during working hours, Monday to Friday, 1:00pm to 4:00pm**.

Travel News Clips

Tips to avoid being victimized on vacation. “No one knows better than the police which tricks criminals are using to prey on unsuspecting tourists.” <http://www.cnn.com/2008/TRAVEL/traveltips/06/24/security.tips/index.html>

Add blank pages to your passport to be on the safe side. “Question: My adult son, traveling with his wife and child, was recently refused permission to board a flight from England to South Africa because he had only one blank page in his passport. How do you know which country wants more than one blank page?” <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/mar/09/travel/tr-spot9>

Visit the newly redesigned Federal Voting Assistance Program website at www.fvap.gov

The Overseas Vote Foundation also has helpful information for absentee voters. Visit their website at www.overseasvotefoundation.org

Berlin: voteberlin@state.gov
Frankfurt: votefrankfurt@state.gov
Munich: votemunich@state.gov

It's Your Future, Vote for It!

The Presidential Primaries are winding down, and the candidates are hitting the campaign trail. Now is a great time to inform yourself about the candidates and their positions, and decide what issues are most important to you! Every party has a web page full of information so that you can make a confident, informed choice.



If you will be voting from overseas, now is also the time to register. The mail can take several weeks to go back and forth, and ballots must be postmarked and received by certain dates to be counted, according to your home state regulations. Make sure you allow enough time to receive your voting materials, make an informed decision, and return your ballot in time!

The easiest way to gather information about your state and register is online through the Federal Voting Assistance Program at www.fvap.gov. You can also call toll-free from Germany 0800-1007-428. The FVAP is a government organization with aims of informing and educating U.S. citizens worldwide of their right to vote; fostering voter participation, and protecting the integrity of the electoral process at the Federal, state, and local level.

You can also pick up a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) at your Consulate or download one from www.fvap.gov, and mail it to the election office in your state of residency. You must fill out the **FPCA 60 days before your state's primary elections or 45 days before the general election**, according to the instructions on the FVAP website. The local election office in your state will then mail you an absentee ballot a month before the general election.

Your absentee ballot must be received at the elections office **by the close of polls on Tuesday, November 2, 2008**. If you have not received a ballot by mid-October, you may request a Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot, but you must have applied for a regular absentee ballot at least 30 days before the election.

The Overseas Vote Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to helping overseas Americans cast their votes, and also provides detailed information for overseas voters. See their website www.overseasvotefoundation.org for further information.

Questions? Contact American Citizen Services at your Consulate (see sidebar), or the FVAP office directly.

Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)

For those of you with non-citizen friends and family traveling to the United States later this year, the ESTA program will be a new reality for travelers using the visa waiver program. **It does not apply to U.S. citizens traveling overseas.**

ESTA is a new online system that is part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and is required by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. Travelers will log on to the ESTA web-based system and complete an application online providing the biographical and eligibility information currently required on the paper I-94W form. **Once ESTA is mandatory, all nationals or citizens of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries, including accompanied and unaccompanied minors, who plan to travel to the United States for temporary business or pleasure will require an individual, approved ESTA prior to boarding a carrier to travel by air or sea to the United States under the VWP. VWP travelers who fail to obtain an ESTA confirmation after ESTA becomes mandatory may be denied boarding, experience delayed processing, or be denied admission at a U.S. port of entry.**

Travelers are not required to have specific plans to travel to the United States under the VWP before they apply for an ESTA authorization. DHS recommends that an ESTA approval be obtained as soon as a VWP traveler begins to plan a trip to the United States, and no later than 72 hours before departure. ESTA has, however, been designed to allow for the accommodation of last minute and emergency travelers. Additionally, if applicants' destination addresses or itineraries should change after their authorization has been approved, they may easily update that information through the ESTA website.

In most cases, ESTA will provide an almost immediate determination of eligibility for travel under the VWP. Possible responses include: **Authorization Approved**, **Travel Not Authorized**, or **Authorization Pending**. ESTA approval **only** authorizes a traveler to board a carrier for travel to the U.S. under the VWP. In all cases, CBP officers make admissibility determinations at our ports of entry.

An approved ESTA travel authorization is:

- valid for up to two years or until the traveler's passport expires, whichever comes first;
- valid for multiple entries into the U.S.; and
- not a guarantee of admissibility to the United States at a port of entry.

In the event that an ESTA applicant is denied authorization to travel to the United States under the VWP, he or she will be referred to www.travel.state.gov for information on how to apply for a U.S. visa.

In order to apply for an ESTA authorization, go to <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>



Homeland Security

For more information, visit "Know Before You Go" at www.CBP.gov/travel.

IMPORTANT ESTA DATES

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Aug. 1, 2008 | ESTA Available for Voluntary Applications |
| Oct 15, 2008..... | ESTA site available in German |
| Nov, 2008..... | ESTA announced in Federal Register |
| Jan 12, 2008..... | ESTA becomes mandatory for Visa Waiver travel |

Passport Cards and You

You can link to the passport Application Wizard for all passport forms at <https://pptform.state.gov/>.

For more specific information on the passport card, visit http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html.

Access the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative directly at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html.

The first passport cards went into production in the United States July 14, 2008, and applications will begin to be accepted overseas **later this year**. The passport card is similar to a U.S. passport book in that both documents convey proof of a recipient's identity and U.S. nationality or citizenship. The purpose of the passport card is to facilitate frequent travel for persons living in U.S. border communities, and it is available to applicants at a fraction of the cost of a passport book. Read on to find out if a passport card is right for you.

The passport card can be used for **land and sea travel only** into the United States from **Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and most Caribbean locations** (see below). ***Air travelers must possess a valid passport book.*** Under no circumstances can the passport card be used as a substitute for a regular booklet-style passport to undertake air travel.

The passport card will contain a radio frequency identification chip (or RFID chip) and integrated contactless circuit (ICC) which, as read by DHS's PASS System, will point to a record stored in secure government databases. No personal information is written to the RFID chip itself. The chip is also covered in a radio frequency protective sleeve to further mitigate privacy concerns.

The passport card carries the same validity as a regular passport book, ten (10) years for adults, and five (5) years for children 15 years old and younger.

For further information about the U.S. passport card, and about the regulations coming into force to facilitate and govern travel under the terms of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), please visit www.travel.state.gov.



*Locations within the **Caribbean region** from which American citizens may use the passport card to enter the United States by sea include:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 -Anguilla | 9 -Grenada |
| 2 -Antigua and Barbuda | 10 -Jamaica (excluding business travel) |
| 3 -Aruba | 11 -Montserrat |
| 4 -Bahamas | 12 -Netherlands Antilles |
| 5 -British Virgin Islands | 13 -St. Kitts and Nevis |
| 6 -Cayman Islands | 14 -St. Lucia |
| 7 -Dominica | 15 -St. Vincent and the Grenadines |
| 8 -Dominican Republic | 16 -Turks and Caicos |

Welcome to the NEW Frankfurt Consular Section Chief!



I am very pleased to join you all here in Frankfurt. Although this is my first assignment in Germany, having completed two consular assignments in Japan I feel well prepared for working at a visa waiver post that provides visa support to some of the world's largest trans-national corporations, serves many military bases, and provides consular services to a thriving expatriate community.

Grappling with many of the same kinds of issues over the years, I have long admired the professionalism of the Frankfurt Consular staff. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to at long last work with them directly and will do all in my power to maintain the high standards of efficiency, customer service and professionalism you have come to expect from the U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt. I look forward to meeting with you at our American Citizen Information Night!

Join us for American Citizen Information Night September 16th

Americans resident in Germany and their immediate family members are invited to attend. At least one person in the family must present a U.S. passport for admittance to the Consulate. Booths include **Absentee Voting, Passport and Immigration Services, Federal Benefits, U.S. Taxes, and Security Awareness.**

The **Community Groups Information Fair** provides information on organizations like schools, churches and other non-profit social groups of interest to Americans resident in and around Frankfurt..

For more information and directions please visit the webpage http://frankfurt.usconsulate.gov/acs_info_night2.html

Community Calendar

Sep. 3, 13:00 - 18:00

Frankfurt Newcomers Festival at the Römer in downtown Frankfurt am Main. See http://www.newcomers-festival.de/en/frankfurt1/index_frankfurt.htm for details.

Sep 16, 17:00—19:00

American Citizen Information Night at the U.S. Consulate, Frankfurt am Main

Nov. 2, TBD

Düsseldorf Newcomers Festival, location also TBD. Check http://www.newcomers-festival.de/en/duesseldorf1/index_duesseldorf.htm for details as they become available.

Holiday Closures

Monday, Sep 1st: Labor Day
Thursday, Sep 25th: Staff Administration
Friday, Oct 3rd: Day of German Unity
Monday, Oct 13th: Columbus Day
Thursday, Oct 30th: Staff Administration
Tuesday, Nov 11: Veteran's Day
Thursday, Nov 20th: Staff Administration
Thursday, Nov 27th: Thanksgiving

Opening Hours and Contact Information

Consulate General—Frankfurt
Giessener Strasse 30
60435 Frankfurt am Main

passport Unit
Open by appointment: 7:30 am to 11:30am M-F
Tel: (069) 7535-2100, 2:00 — 4:00 pm only
Fax: (069) 7535-2304
Email: frankfurtpassports@state.gov or
frankfurtbirthabroad@state.gov

Contact information and opening hours
<http://frankfurt.usconsulate.gov>

Special Consular Services
Open by appointment 7:30am to 11:30, M-F
Tel: (069) 7535-2102
Fax: (069) 7535-2252
Email: GermanyACS@state.gov
After-Hours Emergencies: (069) 7535-0